



BUREAU OF POPULATION, REFUGEES, AND MIGRATION



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REFUGEE ADMISSIONS PROGRAM FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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Since 1975, almost 110,000 refugees from Latin American and Caribbean countries have been resettled in the United States. Over 70,000 have come from Cuba, with other significant numbers from Haiti, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Colombia. In FY 2010, 4,982 refugees from five countries in the region were admitted to the United States, including 4,818 from Cuba.

The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) coordinates in-country processing of eligible Cubans as well as small numbers of non-Cubans through a Refugee Coordinator posted to the U.S. Interests Section in Havana. A regional Refugee Coordinator posted to the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá, Colombia coordinates refugee admissions from the rest of the region. The Department of Homeland Security/U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (DHS/USCIS) travels to conduct refugee adjudication interviews in Cuba, Ecuador and Costa Rica, and, as needed, to other countries in the region. Transportation to the United States is arranged by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Colombian Refugees

In FY 2002, the U.S. began to resettle vulnerable Colombian refugees located in Ecuador and Costa Rica referred by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Most Colombian refugees have fled the armed conflict as a result of persecution for political opinion at the hands of either left-wing guerrilla or right-wing paramilitary groups. Delays surrounding individuals who had provided material support under duress to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), National Liberation Army of Colombia (ELN), and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) have been resolved with the issuance of exemptions for these groups in 2007 and 2008. 123 Colombian refugees were admitted in FY 2010.

Cuba Program

At present, the bulk of U.S. refugee processing in the region is conducted in Cuba. The refugee program is a component of the U.S.-Cuba Migration Accords under which the U.S. issues some 20,000 travel documents annually to Cubans for permanent resettlement in the United States. Cubans eligible to apply for admission to the United States through the in-country refugee program under the Priority 2 (P-2) category include:

- Former political prisoners;
- Members of persecuted religious minorities;
- Human rights activists;
- Forced labor conscripts during the period 1965-1968;
- Persons deprived of their professional credentials or subjected to other disproportionately harsh or discriminatory treatment resulting from their perceived or actual political or religious beliefs; and
- Persons who have experienced or fear harm because of their relationship – family or social – to someone who falls under one of the preceding categories.

Cubans outside Cuba may be considered for resettlement if referred by UNHCR or a U.S. Embassy.

FY 2010 Admissions Program

The FY 2011 ceiling for refugee admissions from Latin America and the Caribbean is 5,500. Of these, the vast majority will be Cubans processed through the in-country program.